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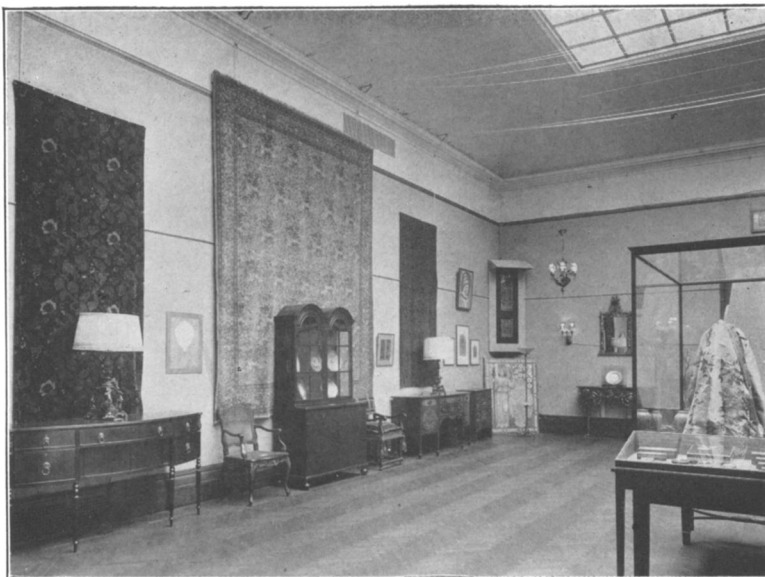
SIDE-LIGHTS ON THE FIFTH EXHIBITION OF INDUSTRIAL ART

COMMENTS of visitors to the Fifth Exhibition of Current Work by Manufacturers and Designers showing the influence of originals in the Museum present a number of interesting side-lights on the collection itself and on the conditions controlling it. In the December issue of the BULLETIN we tried to make clear the background of life and trade and commerce of which this exhibition must always be a reflection, or from another point of view, an outgrowth. This is in a way a consideration of primary importance because it establishes at once the relationship between the Museum and the world of production; there can be no doubt as to the directness of museum effect or the value of museum study in terms of daily production in mills and factories. Museum exhibitions rarely lend themselves to this characterization, the chief difficulty being that museums generally are not equipped to give space to such current material and, secondly, that there has not always been such material available for exhibition. But the tide has turned; the material is now to be had, and in quantity; the obstacle now lies in the other direction, that of its proper display as an educational feature in museum service to the community.

It is a source of gratification among us here that the interest of museums in the art trades and the recognition of museum values in these trades themselves have in recent months shown a decided increase. In this direction the example of the Metropolitan Museum has borne fruit beyond our greatest hopes. Our effort has developed as part of a great movement for the benefit of American design in the industrial arts. Our exhibitions have always been representative only in small degree, since they have consisted only of things based on study in our own galleries; yet this limitation has never prevented us from offering an all-round and fairly inclusive exhibition. Were it possible to open the galleries for a general exhibition of industrial art, regardless of the source of inspiration for the motives shown, our greater effectiveness

would appear at once, for our influence has traveled not only from man to man, or from firm to firm, but from piece to piece. We deal with firms and individuals by direct lines, but we must not forget that each good design of museum inspiration becomes a nucleus by which our influence is in turn relayed to others. In the end a network of effectual work is built up on the principle of a great organization with many branches, each directly connected and directly responsible, yet each an operating center of distribution. Thus we cannot count our exhibits and present the total as the sum total of our success. We reap our reward in the ultimate spread of the new doctrine of design in the art trades; the doctrine based upon the best design for the greatest number and the use of the best agencies available for the improvement of current design toward that end. In the last analysis it is a matter not of numerical effectiveness but of better thinking, saner interpretation, more honest service of the trades to the public, and finally a heightened morale.

This broader influence is seen further in a geographic survey of the firms and individuals reached. Chicago, Minneapolis, Cincinnati, Philadelphia, Worcester, Scranton, Boston, Providence, Meriden, Trenton, are a few of the cities touched, not to mention smaller communities which are factory communities primarily and controlled entirely, or nearly so, by a single enormous concern, as is the case in South Manchester or Shelton, both in Connecticut. This geographical distribution of our lines is in itself a wholesome sign of our improving taste. It is a proof that the seed has sent forth its roots in American soil in widely separated regions. In short, it is a guarantee that our manufacturers and designers are gradually following the lead of the long-headed men among them and are making every effort to improve American design. And why should they not? Purchases of home furnishings represent a half billion of American earnings annually; each year that sum is expended for items of industrial art other than clothing and jewelry. This stupendous sum should be written to the credit of American designers



ROOM J 10



ROOM J 9

EXHIBITION OF MODERN INDUSTRIAL ART, THE WORK OF
MANUFACTURERS AND DESIGNERS SHOWING THE
INFLUENCE OF THE MUSEUM COLLECTIONS

and producers. Unless the best is offered to our people, whose tastes improve with constant acceleration, producers cannot hope to maintain their present positions. There are, of course, dealers and middlemen to be reckoned with; that is another question and too large a one to be here discussed. Suffice it to say that they, by infinitesimal advances, are likewise approaching the blinding light of good design. To these, more than to our manufacturers or consumers, this light will be blinding; for, like truth in other walks of life, its beauty must be known to be appreciated and fully understood to be interpreted to others.

While the showing in this exhibition may be said in some respects to present unusual merit, there are other fields equally conspicuous because they are not represented at all. Neither glassware nor jewelry appears this year. Commercial conditions in the former field may be considered sufficient to excuse almost anything, even the entire stoppage of production. But for the absence of jewelry there can be no explanation satisfactory to friends of progress. Do the jewelry designers use originals to improve their current work? Or do they modify—"redesign"—the old things? Or do they pore over the same old European pattern books? There are associations among them; there are far-sighted men among them; surely our light is not so dim that it can be missed by so important an industry when a score of others have used our collections for their profit for decades. A leader is lacking, but a wise leader who knows the methods of orderly advance, not the sales promoter who starts a stampede.

There are other things of which we have not enough, such as laces, silver, commercial packages. This last savors so much of publicity that our progress must be slow in that direction. To use the Museum in the design of your packages, when it is publicly known that someone else has done the same thing before you, is an advertising loss to you. There may be a similar argument in any other field of production, but it does not seem to have acted as a deterrent anywhere else. Here also the tide will turn. Good design is the best selling point a maker or dealer can have; it will not

be downed, for it represents too great a factor in the price of the commodity. So we have hopes in this direction as well.

Recently twenty thousand examples were made of a certain piece of furniture: think of the effect of that design on American homes and pray that it was blessed of the muses. Every day commercial packages are made by the million and they with their contents are sold over thousands of counters for small silver coins. The distribution of these packages is almost unlimited; their good or evil effect is in proportion. And they are of a piece with the general field of magazine and newspaper advertising, in which also we have registered a decided effect. It is always design that counts: it is mechanical design that sells a tractor; it is artistic design that sells a hat. Manufacturers and dealers will attest that it is package design that has sold the vast majority of products in unnumbered lines of production.

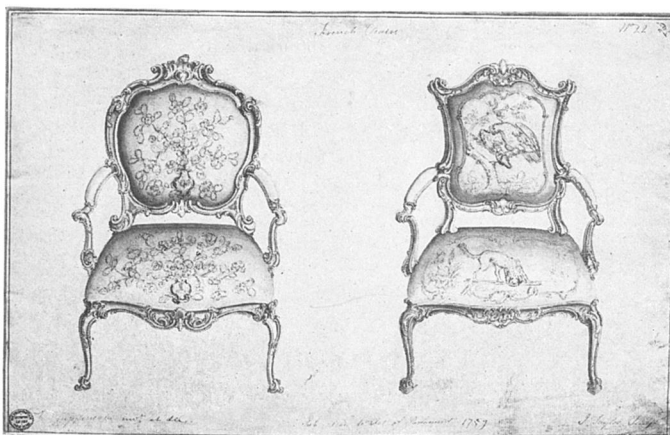
But the lasting character of our work, of which this exhibition is a small indication, is the cumulative effect, the gathering force of years, the record of decades and not of a single twelvemonth. The best result of all is the increasing number of firms that make regular use of museum facilities. Some there are who begin with a great burst of energy and add a "museum line" to their catalogues. That is good, but insufficient. It is good publicity but poor business. All too soon the public will wonder whether manufacturers and designers are hampered by certain shortcomings which prevent them from seeing the value of museum resources in terms of their products. The solid phalanx of progress is composed of those producers and designers who have come to regard the Metropolitan Museum as one of their constant sources of inspiration—a laboratory of growth. Their number is not yet legion—nor, perhaps, would that be good for any concerned—but their number grows each year, in fact, each month.

The exhibition itself is not our objective; that is a by-product, an ancillary effect, a demonstration, and to a certain extent a record. The real work is not known or even visible. It is done in shops and factories and designing rooms; it is done by

constant visiting and inspecting; it is done by reciprocal study, for the Museum must learn as the manufacturer or designer must learn. Or again it is done by persuasion, by argument, by presenting proof. In all of this the coöperation of several scores of trade journals is invaluable. Willingly and gladly these excellent papers have presented the Museum's story for the producer and the designer to read. They have presented it carefully and correctly; they have not offered a panacea, but have simply demonstrated the certain success of those who help themselves. In this they have

its time and country. The set consists of two hundred and seven sheets of drawings, in pencil, pen, and wash, mounted on the blue pages of two eighteenth-century scrap books, on the backs of which appear in an old hand the legends "Original Drawings Chipp—Vol. 1" and "Vol. 2." On the insides of the front covers is pasted the bookplate of the Baron Foley. They are now being exhibited for the first time in a case in the most northerly of the three print galleries.

Of the drawings no less than one hundred and seventy-eight correspond minutely,



ORIGINAL DRAWING FOR THE ENGRAVING NO. 22
OF CHIPPENDALE'S DIRECTOR, 1762

given the best possible evidence of their value to the trades they serve.

These are but a few of the trains of thought this exhibition of current work sets in motion: any dozen random comments overheard in the galleries would start as many more.

R. F. B.

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY FURNITURE DRAWINGS

BY one of fortune's oddest quirks the Museum was able to pick up at auction in New York last spring one of the most interesting sets of original designs for furniture that was produced in England during the eighteenth century, and what, all things considered, may not unreasonably be regarded as the most important of

though in reverse, to the plates in one or another of the 1754 and the 1762 editions of Thomas Chippendale's Gentleman and Cabinet Maker's Director, the most famous and notorious of all English furniture pattern books; and, for reasons that it is not necessary to enter upon in the BULLETIN pages, they may be considered as having been beyond doubt the original drawings from which the engravers of the plates in the Director worked. I am informed by Messrs. Hardie and Smith of the Victoria and Albert Museum at South Kensington that that museum is in possession of fifteen drawings from the series. They are exactly like the Metropolitan drawings in every respect, except of course that they are for other plates. Among them, it is interesting to notice, is the